

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 10188 231345Z

43

ACTION SS-15

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 DRC-01 RSC-01

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R 231216Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3113

USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS PHNOM PENH 10188

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN, CB

SUBJECT: NEED FOR RESTRAINT IN SENDING NIACT IMMEDIATE MESSAGES
FROM THE VOA NEWSROOM

1. ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS ONE OR MORE MISSION OFFICERS HAVE BEEN ROOTED OUT OF BED TO DEAL WITH NIACT IMMEDIATE MESSAGES FROM THE VOA NEWSROOM IN WASHINGTON REQUESTING CLARIFICATION OF MR COMMENTS ON NEWS ITEMS OF MINOR IMPORTANCE. IN ORDER TO PRODUCE THE RESPONSE, IT IS NECESSARY TO AROUSE NOT ONLY THE EMBASSY DUTY OFFICER BUT ALSO THE ACTION OFFICER OR OFFICERS AS WELL (INCIDENTALLY, ALL OF THE AFOREMENTIONED OFFICERS WORK LONG DAYS AND SEVEN DAYS A WEEK AT THIS RELATIVELY SMALL BUT HARD PRESSED POST). SINCE THE ACTION OFFICER MUST BREAK THE NINE PM CURFEW TO REACH THE EMBASSY, HE HAS TO STOP TO IDENTIFY HIMSELF AT SEVERAL FANK ROAD BLOCKS EN ROUTE TO AND FROM THE OFFICE. AS OFTEN AS NOT, THE ACTION OFFICER THEN HAS TO WAKE UP ONE OR MORE OTHER OFFICERS FOR INFORMATION AND/OR CLEARANCES. ON ONE OCCASION, HE EVEN HAD TO DISTURB THE FANK SPOKESMAN.

TO GIVE AN IDEA OF THE KIND OF QUERY BEING SERVICED, WE MIGHT MENTION THAT ONE RELATED TO THE STATE OF REPAIR OF A SMALL BRIDGE. ANOTHER INVITED COMMENT ON AN INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN A REUTERS REPORT AND REPORTS FROM OTHER WIRE SERVICES AS TO THE NUMBER OF INSURGENT DEAD AT KOMPONG CHAM (VOA ALREADY HAD THE OFFICIAL FANK STATISTICS, AND OTHER DETAILS WERE AVAILABLE IN FBIS AT LEAST TWELVE HOURS BEFORE THE QUERY WAS INITIATED).

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 10188 231345Z

OUR USINFO REPORT, SENT DAILY BEFORE 1600 HOURS LOCAL TIME

BY IMMEDIATE CABLE, IS DESIGNED TO CARRY ALL THE MOST SIGNIFICANT UP-TO-THE-MINUTE NEWS ITEMS.

2. ACTION RECOMMENDED:

A. WHILE THE EMBASSY APPRECIATES VOA'S EFFORTS TO PROVIDE THE FULLEST INFORMATION IN NEWSCASTS, IT URGES THAT THE PRACTICE OF SENDING NIACT IMMEDIATE MESSAGES ON RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT NEWS ITEMS BE DISCONTINUED.

B. THAT, IF THE VOA NEWS ROOM NEEDS ROUTINE INFORMATION OR COMMENT, HAVING FIRST CHECKED FBIS, IT CALL THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE AT THE NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CE OER (NMCC) WHICH IS BELIEVED TO HAVE FULL UP-TO-DATE DETAILS ON KHMER MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS A PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER ON DUTY AT NMCC TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY.

3. COMMENT: NATURALLY WE ARE MOST ANXIOUS TO ASSIST THE VOA IN PRESENTING AN ACCURATE, FULL AND UP-TO-MINUTE PICTURE OF CAMBODIAN DEVELOPMENTS. WE WOULD WELCOME ROUTINE INQUIRIES DURING ALL BUT THE LOCAL NIGHT HOURS AND WE WILL OF COURSE BE GLAD TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION ANY TIME, DAY OR NIGHT, TO SUPPLY INFORMATION OR CLARIFICATION ON MATTERS OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE.
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